

# Hurricane season 2001

## Preparation,planning reduce risk of casualty, damage

by 2nd Lt. Rosemary Heiss  
Public Affairs

Hurricane season begins June 1, and there's plenty to do between now and then to get properly prepared for the native storms, according to base readiness officials.

"By the time someone tells you to evacuate, you should know exactly what's going on and what you're going to do," said Master Sgt. Ray Costa, 16th Civil Engineer Squadron, readiness flight superintendent. "You don't want to wait until June or until the first storm shows up."

Advanced planning and preparation are keys to surviving the storms that claim lives and millions of dollars in property every year.

Now is the time to create a hurricane support kit for the family or check the one already in place, said Sergeant Costa.

The kit should contain batteries, an AM/FM radio, canned food and bottled water.

According to the readiness flight superintendent, the radio (or even a battery operated television if possible) and batteries are critical during a major storm because phone lines are often down and the news provides the only link to information about condition changes.

Emergency management experts recommend keeping enough bottled water to give every person one gallon of water per day for the entirety of the storm and recovery period — usually at least two weeks.

In addition to a survival kit, people should also have an evacuation route chosen and practiced since U.S. highways 85 and 87 are the only roads that lead north from Hurlburt Field, said Staff Sgt. Jerome Dubose, 16th CES readiness flight logistics NCO in charge and Hurricane Andrew survivor.

"It may be a little inconvenient to practice a hurricane evacuation plan, but it's worth it when the storm hits and everyone knows what to do," he said.

During Hurricane Andrew, base officials delayed evacuating until most others in the community were already on the roads. By the time the base evacuated, roads were clogged, and when the bad weather hit, people were stuck on the roads, Sergeant Dubose said.

"People were scared," he said. "That was the overall feeling. We couldn't even run; where were we going to go? We were caught on the road to Orlando for 12 or 13 hours."

That evacuation has changed the way officials view storms and has given cause for increased storm preparation.

Because water does more damage in a hurricane than wind, Sergeant Costa recommends using the home as a shelter as long as it isn't threatened by flood water or storm surges.

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To prepare a home, he said windows should be boarded when the storm is about 100 miles from landfall.

"Have precut pieces of plywood," he said. "Know where it goes and keep it stored where it's accessible."

People in base housing can't board their windows, so he encourages them to head to one of the five on-base shelters — chapel, child development center, youth center, permanent exercise facility or health and wellness center.

People going to a shelter should take bedding (pillows, blankets, sleeping bags, etc.), any medication that will be needed for about a 72-hour stay and entertainment for children.

When taking shelter in the local area is too risky, some people will have to evacuate.

"If people do bug out," he said, "it's important to let supervisors know, so you'll get the word on when to come back."

Military members are only reimbursed for evacuating if the wing commander declares a mandatory evacuation, according to Capt. David Chisenhall, 16th CES readiness flight commander. Then only expenses to and from the safe haven — usually Maxwell Air Force base, Ala. — are authorized for reimbursement.

Because military members may be required to stay behind when most others are evacuating, other family members must know what preparations to make and how to get out on their own.

During a hurricane, when the eye of the storm passes over, there's a lull in wind and rain, but Sergeant Costa warns not to be fooled by the apparent passing of the storm.

"It's not over yet," he said. "Don't be outside. It's tempting to watch, but don't."

Once a storm is over, the rain and wind is gone, but danger still exists, he said.

Trees and power lines will be down, and because of flooding, animals will be seeking shelter on high ground.

On base, a recovery and ride-out team will be sent out to determine when the base is safe. Then supervisors and unit control centers will call to let people know to return.

The Air Force has 800 numbers in place to communicate with people who are displaced by a storm.

The Hurlburt Field Family Support Center offers information at 884-5441, unless the base is evacuated. Then, information is available through 800 numbers to Dothan, Ala. and the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas at (800) 435-9941. The numbers help disseminate information about where people are and what stage of recovery the area is in.

### Hurricane conditions

**Hurcon 4** — 72 hours prior to the forecast arrival of 50-knot sustained winds or greater.

**Hurcon 3** — 48 hours prior to the forecast arrival of 50-knot sustained winds or greater. *(Base commander determines if evacuation is necessary.)*

**Hurcon 2** — 24 hours prior to the forecast arrival of 50-knot sustained winds or greater.

**Hurcon 1** — 12 hours prior to the forecast arrival of 50-knot sustained winds or greater.

### Emergency numbers

#### HOSPITALS

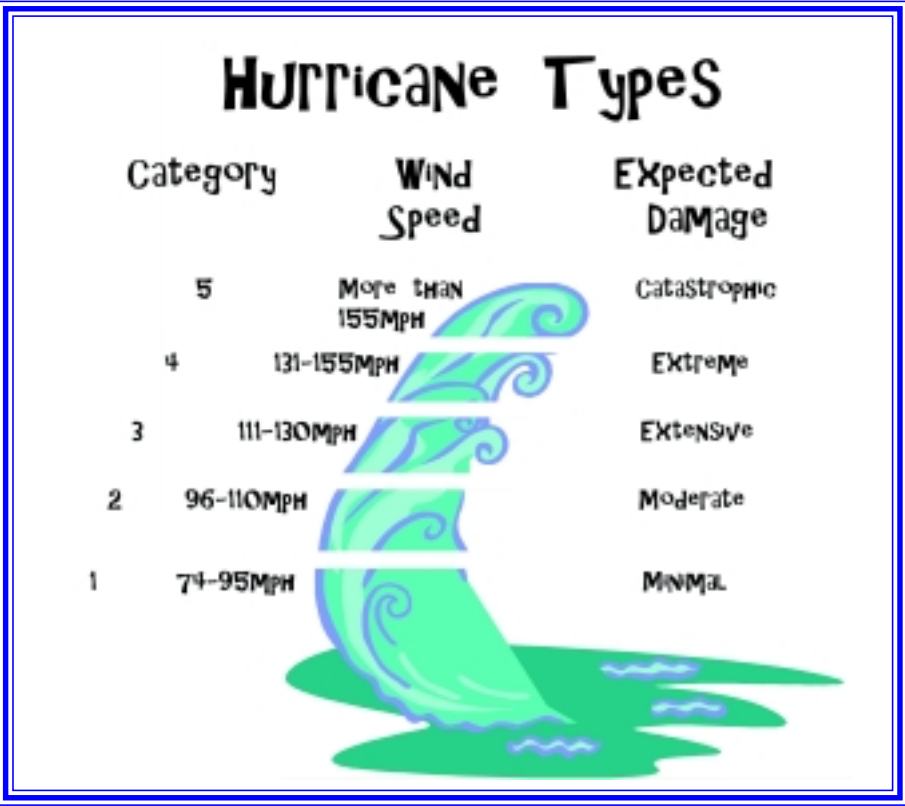
Fort Walton Beach Medical Center — 862-1111  
Santa Rosa Medical Center — 626-7762  
Twin Cities Hospital — 678-4131  
North Okaloosa Medical Center — 682-9731  
Gulf Breeze Hospital — 934-2000  
Eglin Air Force Base Emergency Room — 883-8227

#### UTILITIES

Gulf Power — (800) 225-5797  
Choctawhatchee Electric Company — (800) 342-0990  
Okaloosa Gas — (800) 239-3878  
Sprint — 811 or (800) 326-2497  
Southern Bell — 611  
Southern Bell — Navarre — 780-2355  
Emerald Coast Cable — 862-4142 or 862-0175

#### OTHER HELPFUL NUMBERS

Contact your unit control center for hurricane/evacuation information  
Hurlburt Field Disaster Preparedness Office — 884-1152 or 884-1153  
Federal Emergency Management Agency — (800) 426-9029  
National Flood Insurance Program — (800) 638-6620



### Seek shelter

#### Off-base shelters Okaloosa County

Shalimar Elementary School  
First Baptist Church, Valparaiso  
Longwood Elementary School, Shalimar  
Lewis Middle School, Valparaiso

\*Choctawhatchee High School, Fort Walton Beach  
Bruner Middle School, FWB

Niceville High School  
\*Crestview High School

Baker School  
Laurel Hill School

**Santa Rosa County**  
Milton High School  
Pace High School

King Middle School  
\*Berryhill Elementary School, Milton

Jay High School  
**\*Special Needs Shelter**

*Listen to local radio station announcement for openings.*

#### On-base shelters

Health and Wellness Center, building 90332  
Child Development Center, building 90353  
Chapel, building 90203  
Permanent Exercise Facility, building 91601  
Youth Center, building 90304

*When desiring entry into an on-base shelter at Hurlburt Field, go to the youth center. Shelters will be assigned.*

*For shelters at Eglin Air Force Base, go to the youth center near the west gate or the gym on the east side of the base.*

### Sources of information



The Weather Channel  
Local television stations  
Radio emergency broadcast stations  
WKSM-FM 99.5 — Fort Walton Beach  
WYZB-FM 105.5 — Fort Walton Beach  
WFTW-AM 1260 — Fort Walton Beach  
WEBY-AM 1330 — Milton  
WXBW-FM 102.7 — Pace  
WECM-AM 1490 — Milton  
WLWI-FM 92.3 — Montgomery, Ala.  
WOOF-FM 99.7 — Dothan, Ala.

### Be aware

*The following are hurricane preparations classes offered by the family support center in building 90213. They have information about shelters, evacuation routes, disaster kits and more. For more information, call 884-5441:*

- May 24, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- June 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- June 15, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 4 p.m.
- July 13, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 4 p.m.
- Aug. 17, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 4 p.m.
- Sept. 21, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 4 p.m.
- Oct. 12, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

*The family support center also teaches children how to track a hurricane and what to pack in a disaster kit.*

- May 24, 4 p.m.
- June 14, 4 p.m.
- July 12, 4 p.m.
- Aug. 16, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 20, 4 p.m.
- Oct. 11, 4 p.m.

### After the storm

- Stay tuned to local radio for information.
- Help injured or trapped persons.
- Give first aid where appropriate.
- Don't move seriously injured persons unless they're in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help.
- Return home only after authorities advise it's safe to do so.
- Avoid loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately to the power company, police or fire department.
- Enter your home with caution.
- Beware of snakes, insects and animals driven to higher ground by flood water.
- Open windows and doors to ventilate and dry your home.
- Check refrigerated foods for spoilage.
- Take pictures of the damage, both of the house and its contents, and for insurance claims.
- Drive only if absolutely necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed-out bridges.
- Use telephone only for emergency calls.

If you return to a damaged home, take caution when inspecting utilities.

#### Check for gas leaks —

If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building.

Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.

#### Check for electrical system damage —

If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker.

If you have to step in water to reach the fuse box or circuit breaker, call a certified electrician first for advice.

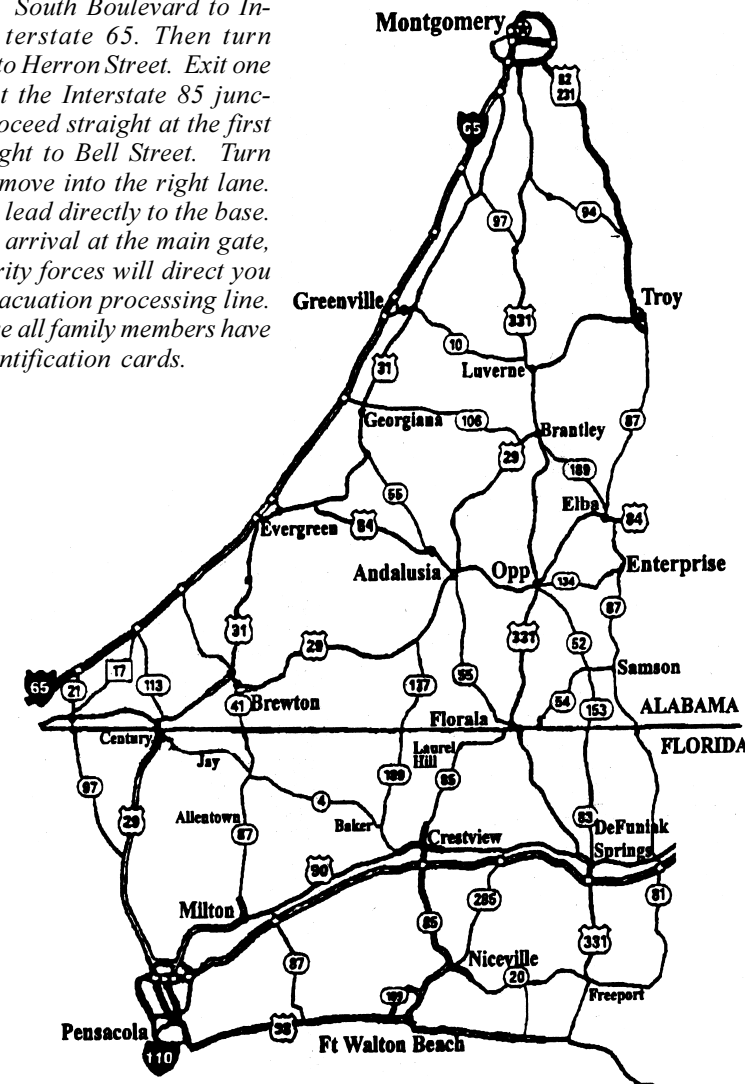
#### Check for sewage and water line damage —

If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber.

If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid the water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

### Directions to Maxwell Air Force Base

**F**rom 331, turn west on South Boulevard to Interstate 65. Then turn north onto Herron Street. Exit one mile past the Interstate 85 junction. Proceed straight at the first signal light to Bell Street. Turn left and move into the right lane. This will lead directly to the base. Upon arrival at the main gate, the security forces will direct you to the evacuation processing line. Ensure all family members have their identification cards.



### Prepare for the worst

Hurricanes can be dangerous killers. Learning the hurricane warning messages and planning ahead can reduce the chances of injury or major property damage.

Plan an evacuation route. Contact the local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter, and ask for the community hurricane preparedness plan. Plans are also available through the family support center. This plan should include information on the safest evacuation routes and nearby shelters.

Be ready to drive 20 to 50 miles inland to locate a safe place.

Have disaster supplies on hand:

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Emergency food and water
- Nonelectric can opener
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards
- Sturdy shoes

Make arrangements for pets. They may not be allowed into emergency shelters for health and space reasons. Contact your local humane society for information on local animal shelters.

Make sure all family members know how to respond after a hurricane.

Teach family members how and when to turn off gas, electricity and water.

Teach children how and when to call 911, police or fire department and which radio station to tune in to for emergency information.

Protect windows. Permanent shutters are the best protection. A lower-cost approach is to put up plywood panels. Use 1/2 inch plywood — marine plywood is best — cut to fit each window. Mark which board fits which window. Pre-drill holes every 18 inches for screws. Do this long before the storm.

Trim back dead or weak branches from trees.

Check into flood insurance. You can find out about the National Flood Insurance Program through your local insurance agent or emergency management office. There is normally a 30-day waiting period before a new policy becomes effective. Homeowners' policies don't cover damage from the flooding that accompanies a hurricane.

Develop an emergency communication plan.

In case family members are separated from one another during a disaster (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), have a plan for getting back together.

Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address and phone number of the contact person.

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency